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# REFORMED JOURNAL

VOLUME II—No. 5

*A Periodical of Reformed Comment and Opinion*

MAY, 1952

## OUR DUTCH TRADITION

SOME of us were speaking of it again the other day. It was in connection with the Queen's visit to our school and town. It was in connection with the ceremony at which Her Majesty accepted the distinction of having the chair in the language and culture of the Netherlands designated the Queen Juliana Chair. It was in connection with this that we spoke of it, and also in connection with Professor J. C. Berkouwer's theological lectures in the Calvin Foundation.

We were talking about that old problem of how, since the language is getting away from us, we are going to maintain a real contact with the Reformed mind of The Netherlands. We felt that such contact ought to be maintained. It was not that any of us supposed a peculiar magic inhered in the Dutch language for the vital possession of Reformed Christianity. None of us thought that speaking Dutch is a condition of being Reformed. Nobody wanted to be carried on the shoulders of Old Country effort. We were all glad to acknowledge that being American commits us to developing an American Reformed Christianity.

All the same, we spoke a little nostalgically of the passing of those leaders in our church to whom the historic reformed mind as it developed in The Netherlands was an intimate and familiar thing. We felt that it was this, so, though it was not this alone, which in some sense made the loss of men like Zwier, and Beets, and Kromminga, and Van Wyk, and Lamberts, and their kind, an irreparable loss. A good many of that kind are with us

still, but they are in the main the older men. A generation is now at the pulpit to whom Dordt and Reveil and Af-scheiding, to whom Groen, and Kuyper, and Bavinck, and all those formerly spoken of as "onze Calvinistische schrijvers," are rather a name than an experience. Just ask the second-hand booksellers what a deceased old minister's library, its shelves groaning under the works of Voetius, Smijtegeld, Brakel, Hellenbroek, Francken, and the like, is worth, and you will learn that this generation has forgotten Joseph.

There is no point, of course, in becoming sentimental about this. Being Dutch is, as I say, no sure touchstone for Reformed loyalty or conviction. I have myself been tentatively amused, when, while hearing candidates interviewed for teaching positions in our schools, I heard the question put to them: "Can you read Dutch?" When the answer was affirmative, the effect on the interrogating authorities was re-

assuring all around. It seemed an added guarantee of soundness. Sentimentality? Perhaps, but not necessarily. The feeling was there, not without reason, that the man who has gone through his paces in Kuyper and Bavinck and Geesink and Woltjer, and the like, has a deeper Reformed rootage, and a finer Reformed texture, than a man who has not.

What matters, I repeat, is less the Dutch language, than the Reformed mind to which it gives access. It is a mind which has much to teach us. It has age: it exhibits historic experience. This is a hard truth for us Americans to come by. We keep thinking that all it takes to make a way of life, a theology, or a culture is some people and some opportunity. And when we begin thinking this way religiously, ecclesiastically, we exhibit an earmark which the Old World has often detected in us: namely, superficiality. Age has its defects, of course, and the Reformed mind of The Netherlands has exhibited those defects. There has been some fatigue, some scholasticism, some theological sophistication, and some schism. There has been some at the Free University, and there has been some at Kampen. But these do not nullify the advantages: the seasoned wood, the tempered metal, the aged wine of an historically ripened Reformed community of mind. We need it, and must maintain contact with it.

Important as a contributor to the quality of that mind too is its active engagement with the cross-currents of European thought. It works under the challenge of the ideological pres-

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tures of the Continent. The very situation of the Reformed community in Holland forces it to take account of friend and foe. There the Reformed mind defines and refines itself in interaction with opposed and related minds. For one thing, it is challenged by the big state church, the Hervormde Kerk, in its variant movements and schools of thought. It is further stimulated to apology and defense by the strongly active Catholic witness in Holland and Western Europe. Moreover, the newer phenomenological and existential thinking, making their bids from the Scandinavian North, from Germany and from France, go into the forge in which the steel of the Reformed mind of The Netherlands is tempered. Hence the density of its texture, and its malleability. It is an active mind, and we should benefit from it, maintain our interdependence with it.

Moreover, the community of Christian Reformed people in Holland has size. Some 800,000 Gereformeerden in a country of some 10,000,000 make a difference. *Ze tellen mee*. We, with our 165,000 in a country of 150,000,000, lack this magnitude. Man for man, we may be as good, the quality and devotion may be as sound, our caliber may be as high, but we feel ourselves to be culturally alone and eccentric, and when we speak our voices crack. In journalism, in commerce, in politics, and in literature we have no distinguishable culture. In all this too we must continue to learn from them.

They give us the means. So historically matured, continentally engaged, and practically influential a mind naturally expresses itself in considerable scholarly and journalistic activity. Where there are leaders and readers, and where there is real concern to keep them together, there is an expressive literary life. Where there is thought and life there is always expression. The productivity of the Gereformeerden in Holland is prodigious, and deserves better attention from us than it has had.

There the Reformed mind pours itself daily into *Trouw*, a paper which goes to some 150,000 readers. It pours itself weekly, or bi-weekly into the *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, the *Bazuin*, *Polemios*, *De Strijdende Kerk*, into *Belijdenis en Leven*, *Eenigheid des Geloofs*, and *Reformatie*. It puts itself monthly into *Horizon*, *Bezinning*, and *Ontmoeting*. It publishes itself in substantial quarterlies, the *Free University*

*Quarterly* and *Philosophia Reformata* among others. And most of these are but spade work, and proving ground, for what turns up later, purged and distilled, in published volumes. For some notion of the number and nature of these, we have only to brace ourselves, and then examine the periodic catalogs of Kok at Kampen, Bosch en Keuning at Baarn, or Wever at Franeker. Not all of the books are excellent by any means. Some are fugitive colportage, some useful books of the hour. But there are some too which are destined to become, or at least to contribute to, the books of all time.

All this, certainly, is a token of an historically disciplined, confidently established, and culturally concretized Reformed community. It cannot be neglected without loss. That is the thing we spoke of, prompted by Her Majesty Juliana's visit to our campus and our city. We hoped the renaming of our Dutch chair at Calvin was an earnest of our intent to maintain the Dutch tradition. This self of ours, this Reformed self, that we are all trying in our lives to educate, is an historical self. It is historical ultimately in its roots in Palestine and the Orient; it is historical proximately in its roots in Western Europe, most particularly the Reformation North. Dutch is in this sense the natural gateway to the very past which defines us, which goes to making us what we are. By means of it we can read history from the vantage point of the Protestant Reformation.

This should be enough said, as I think educated Reformed men will recognize without contention. It seems clear that our leaders, our ministers, our educated men, should learn the Dutch and learn it well. To put an English Bavinck and an English Berkouwer into the hands of others than ourselves is invaluable service. But that is not for our leaders, our ministers, our professors. If Catholics can lock up their students in a closet for two years until they know the Latin of their Aquinas cold, we can teach ours to read Bavinck.

One hopes too, however, that the Reformed leaders of The Netherlands will learn English. This is to demand a lot perhaps. They have their traditional Greek and Latin to command, and nobody will want them to sacrifice those. And they manage their German and their French admirably, being compelled to it by force of circumstance. But they should learn English too, and learn it so well that they can

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think in it, compose in it. They ought to command its idiom, handle it subtly. They have this great benefit of being nursery and schoolhouse to the historical Reformed mind. It were provincial in them, and myopic, to suppose that the world will make a beaten path to their door. They must peddle their produce.

The Dutch Vondel is not so many cuts beneath the English Milton in real worth, but mark how his language limited him. The *Bilderdijk* is as formidable an interesting a figure as Byron, but who in America knows *Bilderdijk*? I see the Reformed leaders of The Netherlands should put themselves in Joseph Conrad's predicament: the man could write equally well in three languages and chose the English only for practical reasons.

Be the means what they may, however — mastery of the Dutch, mastery of the English, foreign lecturers on the Calvin Foundation, Ecumenical Synod, inter-church correspondence, exchange of theological students — we must achieve the end: interdependence with the Reformed mind of the Netherlands. I remember a man returning from the Old Country some years back. He had visited his parents' birthplace. He returned, knowing himself better. "I felt I had roots," he said. That is the point. We must feel that we have roots or we shall be superficial.

HENRY ZYLSTRA



# On Guidance and Counselling

By JOHN TIMMERMAN\*

JEFFERSON's letters to Peter Carr, his nephew, were designed to produce a richly stored mind, saturated with the classics and thoroughly able to make intelligent decisions about himself and his world. Franklin's *Autobiography* illustrates pointedly the supreme value of self-education in writing, thinking, and action. Lincoln was a man who thought his own way through a tangle of difficulties. Henry Adams applied a life-long irony to what everybody else thought. Whitman always thought of Americans as pioneers, hewing independently through dense forests to new horizons. Sentences from Emerson's "Self-reliance" used to be spouted on Commencement day. The American tradition is one of spiritual daring, independent thinking and action.

That ideal is being replaced by the idol of security. The young man at twenty wants a good look at the old age pension system of the institution that employs him. He wants to be safe; he wants to hedge his tender ego in; he wants always to bet on the right horse. The statistics and charts must be on his side. He looks for guide books to success, for a bundle of maxims originated by Mrs. Grundy and recommended by Dale Carnegie. To make him perfectly happy, the schools are introducing courses in living. In the high school, America's youth is taught to cook and sew, to telephone and converse, to meet people, to marry happily and live without mutual mayhem. Plans are afoot to teach him how to drive a car. He must also, of course, be counselled, regularly, painstakingly, lovingly, so that he may live and die happily with the proper insurance at every turn. Here lies No. 72791, safe from womb to tomb.

This spirit of security, first and foremost, this passion for uninterrupted progress without challenge, daring, or risk, this cultivation of the spirit of dependence on and surrender to the chartered course seems to me neither American nor Christian. Christianity is a personal religion; though one is born in the covenant, one must in time choose to keep or to break that covenant. The Christian must make his own choices and commitments; he must in

a real sense work out his own salvation and quit himself like a man. Protestantism is heartily committed to the vital and strengthening communion of saints, but the individual believer must consciously contribute to it. The Christian is humbly dependent upon God; but upon that entire surrender he builds a sturdy independence. Education, and especially Christian education, makes self-reliant men and women.

\* \* \*

ONE of the educational techniques, nobly conceived and nobly intended, it is true, but yet pregnant with peril is the increasingly popular system of counselling. Now, I have nothing against proper counselling by qualified teachers, but I fear its increasing and intensified prevalence. I fear its effect upon independence of thought and decision. I fear a formalized, mechanized counselling system, supported by a battery of tests, elaborate dossiers, and routine interviews. I foresee a faith in methods instead of persons; I fear an undue reliance upon advice, objective tests, and formulae instead of upon character, judgment, and spirit. One can suffocate with kindness, and enervate with good will. Young people, especially if in trouble, need help; but it must be personal, sympathetic, and wise. Advice should be spontaneously sought; elaborate systems and intrusive questioning may prove a boomerang.

Counselling or guidance as an organized, specialized activity was unknown to me in high school and college. My teachers were friends who would willingly give advice if asked for it; in fact, many of them scarcely had to be put on a system to exhort. The teachers' occupational disease of omniscience hardly has to be organized. I was never refused an answer to problems, and sometimes followed the advice. When I taught in high school a decade later, I was regularly assigned some thirty students. I interviewed them, looked over data, developed more data, and presumably gave advice. In college, I am doing the same thing, but I now have considerably more data, including a picture of the person I interview. But the trend is to increase the amount of counselling on all levels. In the grades,

reports are to become not marks but personality analyses, elaborate descriptions of character designed for parents who see their youngsters every day in all their dramatic moods. High schools are to employ specially trained counsellors, equipped with insight and jargon. They will have materials to burn: elaborate data, numerous pictures at different ages, accurate genealogies, information on teeth and digestion, eyesight and earache. They will provide psychological depth. They will be known as the Co-ordinators and Integrators of Personality, occupy a swivel chair in a special office, and be greatly beloved.

Counselling at best, that is, counselling offered by a ripe, sensitive, and specially trained personality is subject to severe limitations. It is no panacea. We are always inclined to overestimate action, bustle, slick mechanisms, elaborate methodologies, mere machinery. Somehow we have more faith in reading tests than in intelligent classroom experience: in the hands of the counsellor the results of such a test provide wonderful enlightenment. Through the batteries of tests our educational alchemists will make gold out of dross. But there are hard limits to counselling; there are matters which it cannot help, and matters upon which it should not enter.

Counselling cannot generate genius. No amount of counselling will disturb the quality of a clod. There are no little lessons in concentration, no gentle stirrings of a prosaic mind. Counselling cannot subsidize the youngster who works too many hours. The average teacher is helpless before neurotics and hypochondriacs. Counselling by the average teacher does little for the brilliant but inert. The counsellor has no balm for unrequited love. The counsellor cannot transcend his own limitations of gift and common sense. If counselling is indiscriminately parcelled out there will be maladjusted, introverted, unsympathetic, and even stupid counsellors. If it is limited to a few, they will be over-burdened. Counselling, if it is to be effective, will probably have to be lodged in a specially trained person who will have to be pretty big.

Counselling ought to be absolutely

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## On Guidance and Counselling - Continued

objective. The counsellor should never enter upon criticism of a colleague. He must, perhaps wearily, state that if the student has a grievance it should be presented to the teacher. The counsellor ought not to participate in family quarrels; the counsellor ought not to take over the pastor's work. The counsellor ought not to take over the work of the parent. The counsellor ought never to give advice or prejudice an issue. The counsellor ought not ever to be wrong. Who wants the job?

At the risk of being considered medi-  
eval in outlook and unkind in spirit, I  
would suggest that counselling be re-

turned to the immediate classroom  
teacher, and that it be carried on in a  
friendly, spontaneous manner. If every  
teacher were a guide, philosopher, and  
friend to his students, if an atmosphere  
of Christian love and mutual regard and  
sympathy were cultivated in every class-  
room, the student would naturally con-  
sult not an assigned teacher but a per-  
sonally attractive one about his diffi-  
culties. We would not encumber the  
student with help, but would gladly  
offer it at his request. Students who are  
obviously and unusually reserved and  
shy could be drawn out in a natural way  
by a discerning teacher (Is the clam-

going to open up in the artificial at-  
mosphere of an interview?) Further-  
more, there are also parents in the  
world; sometimes, counsellors and  
teachers and parents seem to forget this.  
In our circles we have also usually the  
valuable services of a clergyman either  
in the high school or the church. What  
we must preserve is independence of  
spirit, spiritual daring, the capacity to  
ferret out and decide things indepen-  
dently. The wise bird pushes the fledg-  
ling from the nest because it lovingly  
realizes the necessity of independent  
flight. It does, indeed, hover below to  
intercept the faltering bird, but it al-  
ways encourages *flight*. It does not  
carry a lifelong passenger.

## Truth, Language, Compendium Revision

By HENRY STOE

THE word "Truth" has a num-  
ber of meanings.

Taken absolutely, truth is predicable  
only of *God*. This is so both because  
God is the only completely self-con-  
scious person, and because his mind  
and thought constitute the ultimate  
standard of all truth.

In a secondary and derivative sense  
*created things* are true. Because God  
created things in accordance with his  
eternal thought of them, they possess  
and embody truth. A stone, for ex-  
ample, is true in that it exhibits in its  
being and structure the divine idea en-  
tertained of it even before it entered  
into existence.

In a third and still more derivative  
sense *human thoughts and judgments*  
are true. I have an adequate idea of  
a stone when my thought conforms to  
the structure of the stone as that is  
guaranteed by the will and intellect of  
God. My judgments concerning a stone  
are true when they are validated by the  
stone and by God who stands behind it.

It is only at a fourth remove that  
*language* is true. Words are meaning-  
ful when they convey an intelligible  
idea. Statements are true when they  
give adequate expression to a correct  
mental judgment about an objectively  
existing fact embraced in the mind of  
God.

Truth, therefore, has God as its  
source and things as its embodiment.  
Truth requires mind to apprehend it  
and language to express it. God is  
Truth itself. A thing is truth in creat-  
urely existence. A thought, when

sound, is truth apprehended. Lan-  
guage, when adequate, is truth ex-  
pressed.

\* \* \*

ERROR and falsity are the en-  
emies of truth, but these can enter at  
only two points. There can be no error  
in God, for he is absolute Truth. Nei-  
ther can there be error in Things, for  
these are truly, though derivatively,  
what they are. Error can enter only  
on the levels of thought and speech.  
The mind can err, and language can  
err; God and things cannot.

The mind errs when it conceives,  
judges, or reasons falsely. When this  
occurs language can do nothing but  
perpetuate the error, for language is  
subordinate to thought and cannot  
purify and correct it. It can only fol-  
low it, adequately or inadequately.  
Mind, however, is under no compulsion  
to err. By taking care it can appre-  
hend and discern correctly. It cannot  
do this without divine illumination,  
and it cannot do this comprehensively,  
but it can do this genuinely. Knowl-  
edge, though partial, is possible.

And knowledge, when secured, can  
be expressed. It can be translated into  
speech. Thought can take on the form  
of words. The idea can be bodied forth  
in symbols. Through a wise disposi-  
tion of God an adequate correspon-  
dence can be set up between truth and  
language. This correspondence can-  
not be established, of course, without  
effort. To reveal truth, language must  
be carefully fitted to the chastened

thought. It must be painstakingly  
fashioned and selectively applied. This  
takes doing. Words must be chosen  
that are supple enough to follow the  
sinuousness of truth and exact enough  
to contain it. And they must be prop-  
erly arranged in due order. To do all  
this is not easy, but the job can be  
done, and when it is done we have  
every right to call our formulae true,  
not absolutely true indeed, but never-  
theless genuinely and adequately true.

Of course, our formulae are not al-  
ways true even in the limited way prop-  
er to man. Sometimes they fall short  
of what they could and ought to be.  
Even when our thought is true and our  
understanding sound, we may, and  
sometimes do, fail to bridge the gap  
between comprehension and expression.  
We sometimes fail to fit the word to  
the idea. With inept language we  
falsify the truth we know. Through  
the employment of bad words we cor-  
rupt good notions.

Whenever this happens some one  
who shares our conception of the truth  
will sooner or later press for a re-  
vision of our language. He will urge  
that we bring our language into ac-  
cord with truth. And we are bound  
to comply. Responsible calls for suc-  
cumbent linguistic revisions cannot be ignored.  
Because truth is precious no man  
in our communion who suggests "it  
would be truer to say . . ." may  
be dismissed without a hearing. Hence  
proposals to increase the truth-content  
of our formulae are always in order.

\* \* \*



Now it is possible for a person to take exception to language not because it is thought to be in error, but for quite another reason. While freely acknowledging that a given text is in complete accord with truth a man may object to its style and manner. He will then complain not that the language is untrue but that it is uncouth. Granting the material soundness of the diction he will consider it to be formally defective. Accordingly he will wish to see it purged, not of errors, which it has not, but of certain rhetorical impurities which it allegedly does have. He will wish, for example, to see all archaisms, barbarisms, and jargon removed, and the whole made more modern, simple, uniform, and mellifluous. Such a man would not be far from representing what Synod desired last year when it charged its Committee on Education to revise the Compendium.

The position just outlined assumes that language can be at once both materially sound and formally defective. The assumption is correct. Language can be true yet uncouth, exact yet styleless. The reason for this is that language moves simultaneously on two different planes. It has both a vertical and a horizontal reference. In its vertical reference language is oriented to Idea. In its horizontal reference it is oriented to its own immanent canons of excellence. To be completely successful, therefore, it must attend to two things at once. While accommodating itself on one plane to truth it must on another be fashioning itself into a thing of beauty. This double action is difficult and the thing doesn't always come off. Sometimes language achieves style and beauty but fails to be true; at other times it reaches truth but comes out rough hewn. In either case it has to be revised.

If now we assume that the language of the Compendium is of the latter sort — true but formally defective — then not material alteration but only verbal modification is required to render it acceptable. The Committee, I think, realized this. It set out, therefore, merely to polish the language in its formal sense.

But there are hazards in this kind of work, as in every other. The job which the Committee undertook moves on the horizontal plane, and persons at work at it are apt to slight the vertical even though it touches the horizontal at every point and thus cannot

but be modified by operations on the latter plane. Polishers of language are apt to forget that every word and phrase has two dimensions and that an adjustment of language to the canons of style may put it out of relation to the truth. I think the framers of the new revision forgot this. I think that when they made certain formal alterations they unwittingly introduced material error. The committee has completed only 19 questions and yet of this small total a great many effect what I cannot but regard as an *unwanted* change in the truth content of the compendium. Let me illustrate what I mean.

\* \* \*

1. The Compendium of 1943 (hereafter called the Old Compendium) answers the first question of the Catechism by saying, "My only comfort is that I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ."

It is not difficult to see what in that answer would strike the attention of Revisers concerned to polish and stream-line. What would strike them is, first, the "I" standing at such distance from the "am," and, then, the two juxtaposed prepositional phrases. It was precisely these elements, it appears, which offended the committee, for they were purged. In the draft of the revisers the first question is answered in this way: "My only comfort in life and death is that, with body and soul, I am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ."

This is an obvious attempt to modify the language in accordance with the canons of simplicity. But observe what has happened meanwhile to the theology of the catechism. The catechism is here made to say that *in death* I have the comfort that I belong to my savior. Now the catechism says something quite other than this. This, it says, is my *present* comfort, that whether I live or whether I die I am the Lord's. According to the revisers my only comfort *now* is that with body and soul I am the Lord's. This is great comfort indeed. But not so great a comfort as that described by the catechism or the Old Compendium.

\* \* \*

2. As its third question the Old Compendium asked: "Whence do you know your sin and misery?" Notice that word "whence." It's an old word,

no longer in popular usage. Put it in a room with a committee of revisers and it has no chance of survival. It is accordingly gone from the question framed by the Committee. The proposed question asks: "What teaches you your sin and misery?"

On this I should like to remark that I have no prejudices in favor of obsolete words. But until a better word is offered in exchange I will keep "whence." Surely we cannot pluck this little mote and put that beam in our eye which the committee offers. Let the reader decide who sins more against the English language, the man who says "whence" or he who says "what teaches?"

Furthermore, the substitute question goes counter both to the spirit of the catechism and the realities of the spiritual life. What man or child, concerned about his soul, goes about asking "What teaches me my sin?" What he asks is "How can I get to know myself as I truly am; where am I revealed in all my nakedness." And this is in effect the question that the Catechism and the Old Compendium ask and answer.

\* \* \*

3. The fourth question that the Old Compendium asks is: "Where are the principles of God's law laid down?" Notice that phrase "laid down." A reviser is bound to stumble over that. For one thing it is two words, and for another it is uncommon. It is accordingly deleted from the version of the committee. The revisers frame the question in this way: "Where are the principles of God's law expressed?" This is presumably better language.

But observe what happens on the vertical plane. Consider the truth that has been lost. The Old Compendium had declared that "The principles of God's law are laid down in the Ten Commandments." To understand the full import of this statement one must ask oneself what sort of "being" or "existence" principles enjoy. Principles obviously in some sense "are." But in what sense? The answer is that principles are "put" or "posited" or "laid down" by a mind, just as laws are "enacted" by a lawgiver. Only thereafter are they "expressed," and they can be "expressed" by anybody at all. When God wrote the Tables of the Law with his own fingers, this was more than a mere "expression" of the principles of morality. It was a "put-



## Truth, Language, and Compendium Revision

ting" of them, a "laying down" of them. To regard the ten commandments as the "expression" of God's law is to derogate from their high dignity and authority. Moreover, the ten commandments do not "express" the principles of God's law; they *are* or *constitute* the principles of God's law.

\* \* \*

4. In the seventh question the Old Compendium asks "Did God create man wicked and perverse?" The revisers ask, "Was man created wicked and perverse?" At some other time I may wish to comment, among many other things, upon that shift to the passive voice, but now I am concerned only with the answer to this question.

In answer to its question the Old Compendium says: "God created man good and in his own image, endowed with true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." Notice that word "endowed." It's a good word, but it's old, and it must go. Accordingly the revisers answer: "Man was created good and in God's own image, which means that man had true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." Notice that phrase "which means." It is pre-

ferred to "endowed." And then notice what it does to doctrine and to truth. Reflect on what the substitution does to theology. It is here declared that to say that "Man was created good and in God's own image" is equivalent to saying that "Man had true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." The members of the committee know better, but they were staring at that word "endowed," and they lost sight of truth.

\* \* \*

5. In the 11th question the Old Compendium asks, "What are the results of Adam's disobedience?" This same query is made by the revisers in their question thirteen.

To this question the Old Compendium answers: "The guilt of Adam as our covenant head is imputed to all men, and our nature is become totally corrupt, so that we are all conceived and born in sin." As in the other instances already noted the key to the Committee's mind is found in the uncommon word. In the present instance it is the word "imputed." Being uncommon, it must go. The revisers accordingly delete it. The compendium

is a book on theology, the only book on theology that the vast majority of catechumens will ever read, but the word "imputed" must not appear in it. It must not appear in it even though Reformed theology is unthinkable without it. See what happens in its absence.

The Old Compendium had said "The guilt of Adam as our covenant head is imputed to all men." The revisers say "Adam's disobedience brought guilt upon us all." Compare these theologies. In the first formulation Adam's guilt is "laid upon us" by *someone*, namely God. In the second, an impersonal *act*, "Adam's disobedience" is thought of as an *agent* bringing guilt upon us.

But more. The Old Compendium said, "Our nature is become totally corrupt. . . ." The revisers say "Adam's disobedience brought . . . total depravity into our nature." Consider what is here said. It was bad enough to ascribe agency to disobedience; it is worse to hypostatize total depravity and represent it as a substance "brought" into us. With this kind of language we can't teach doctrine. This language is calculated only to confuse the mind and obscure the truth. These words do not reveal; they hide.

## Education and Missions

By HARRY R. BOER

THE Mission Policy Study Committee appointed in 1950 to study indigenous mission principles and their application is presenting to this year's Synod a majority and a minority report on the place of education in missions. The majority is represented by the Revs. Gritter, Evenhuis, Smit and Van Bruggen; the minority by the Revs. Petroelje, Boer and Mr. Hero Bratt. I should like in this article to discuss the issues involved between the two positions.

The two views can be briefly stated. The majority contends that education (by which is understood, in this discussion, government recognized primary and secondary education) may be used for purposes of evangelism as well as for the instruction of covenant children. The minority holds that the only purpose to which education should be put on the mission field is to instruct the children of converts and thereby to strengthen the basis of the Church and of the Christian community. Theologi-

cal questions of considerable scope lie at the heart of the issue and it is in terms of them that the question should be resolved.

### The Argument of the Majority

HOWEVER divergent may be the two viewpoints, some clarification has been achieved on matters that formerly obscured the issue. A committee appointed by the Synod of 1945 to study the question in a narrower context reported in 1946 in favor of the same position taken by the majority. Among the grounds which it adduced in support of its findings were two biblical references — the command of Jesus to teach men to observe all things that he had commanded, and the teaching in which Paul engaged in the school of Tyrannus. From the scriptural command and example for this specifically *religious* instruction the committee jumped to the conclusion that warrant

is given for education of the type here under consideration.

The majority goes out of its way to distance itself from this argumentation. "In trying to find an answer to this question, we naturally turn to the Bible for a precedent. The fact is that there is none." Larger admissions than this are made, however. It is admitted that there is no direct scriptural support at all for the use of education in evangelism but that we "may proceed by inference from the teaching of Scripture." In the New Testament dispensation the Church has reached her majority. She has been freed from precept upon precept, line upon line and has been placed in freedom. The Holy Spirit leads into the truth and therefore we must under his guidance apply Scripture to the practical situation confronting us today.

What then are the grounds drawn by inference from Scripture to support the view that the Church may use formal



education for evangelistic purposes? Four main considerations are adduced. Any means may be used "which is congenial to the Gospel." Paul used available means of travel, synagogues, homes, the school of Tyrannus, modes of writing, literature; he became all things to all men. Therefore the use of education as a means of evangelism would be legitimate for us today. In the second place, schools can be a great help to the Gospel. They readily mold impressionable youth. The Gospel renews not only the soul but the whole man. "That can be done to an extent in the preaching and in Sunday School work, but it would seem that it can be done in no better way than in schools." Moreover, from a Reformed point of view, training of the mind is desirable, and as the church comes into being it will find growing up with it an informed membership. The students will also provide openings into homes, and they will themselves carry the Gospel home.

The third consideration adduced is that the Kuiperian conception of sphere sovereignty is not an absolute one. We ourselves recognize this by allowing the denomination to maintain Calvin College. The Church is interested in Christian education, encourages it and may even take the initiative in starting a movement for Christian education. "It appears to us that the same type of reasoning holds in regard to the mission schools under discussion." And, finally, education has fundamentally the same aim as has the preaching of the Gospel, namely, to make the whole man serviceable to God. "It follows a different method... but it, too, ultimately leads to God and his service." There is, therefore, no reason why the Christian educator may not aim at leading his pupils to the Lord.

This, in brief, is the argument of the majority. Its position is worked out at much greater length in the report, but the above paragraphs state the major theses.

### The Position of the Minority

THE minority bases its case on the fundamental consideration that the missionary task has been entrusted to the Church. When in Reformed theology we speak about the Church we distinguish between two ways in which it comes to expression. On the one hand there is the Church as an organization. It comes to expression in worship, the administration of Word and Sacra-

ments, offices, discipline, deaconal mercy, assemblies, etc. This manifestation of the Church is called the *institute*. It is the formal, official, organized expression of the Church as it exists on earth. But the believers who constitute the Church manifest themselves to the world not only in formal assembly and worship. As members of Christ's Body they also show themselves to be such in the home, in their mutual love and helpfulness, in their Christian walk and activity, in Kingdom enterprises such as Christian education, mercy, press and so much more. This manifestation of Christ's Body is called the Church as *organism*.

We must always remember that the Body of Christ is one and therefore the members of the institute are the members of the organism and, normally, *vice versa*. But Christ has so arranged the work of those who make up his body in its earthly expression that certain tasks are limited to the institute and others are given to believers in their non-ecclesiastical relationships. The division of labor that Christ has effected is not arbitrary. To the organized church has been entrusted the specific task of nurturing the spiritual life of men by means of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This task, along with the manifestation of mercy to the needy and suffering, has been given to the institutional church. Its work, therefore, may be said to root directly in the redemptive work of Christ.

On the other hand, the work that God's people are called upon to do in the discharge of their several callings is reserved to the Church as organism. These callings whether it be in the home, the shop, the school, the laboratory or the field all arise out of creation. Fathers, scientists, teachers and shopkeepers are not supposed to administer the Word and baptize, and the Church as institute is not supposed to engage in agriculture, govern states, conduct scientific inquiries, sponsor art exhibits or run a railroad.

The principle to be observed here is that work arising out of creation or that is given with the natural order the Church as organism performs. The official proclamation of the grace that is in Christ the Church as institute performs. The Church *proclaims* Christ's kingship for all areas of life, it does not itself *engage* in them.

We are now in position to understand why the Great Commission in each case where it is recorded (Matt. 28, Mark 16,

Luke 24, Acts 1) was given to the *Eleven*. It was given to them as official representatives of the Church as institute. They are told to preach, teach, and baptize in the name of Christ. It is they who after Pentecost preach, baptize, found churches, and ordain others who shall do the same. The work of the Church as institute is in Scripture always limited to the specific task which Christ entrusted to it. Only so can it keep its true character of administering the means of grace. Involvement in other activities dissipates its strength and obscures its true purpose.

In sharp contrast to the work of the institute, therefore, stands such an activity of the organism as education. The task of developing the gifts and potentialities of the child rests with the parents. The child has not been given to the church, nor to the state, but to his father and mother. The initial area for his development is the home and insofar as education continues to mold him it should be done by the parentally controlled school as an extension of the home. The natural basis for this relationship between home and school is the fact of birth and parental responsibility, and the religious basis for it is the covenant of grace whereby parents are charged with nurturing their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Education therefore arises out of the relation between parent and child that God has established in the natural order, and it is sanctified by the redemptive work of Christ. However great the *interest* of the Church may be in the kind of education its youth receive, however much it may *encourage* and give moral and financial *support* for Christian education it does not itself *engage* in it.

The fact that the Christian Reformed Church maintains Calvin College is no valid argument against this view. For two reasons. The relationship between Calvin College and the Church has been conditioned by all manner of historical circumstances. It has been a growth and does not rest on considerations of principle. No one holds that the relationship is a normative one. But, more importantly, Calvin College, whatever its relationship to the Church may or ought to be, is decidedly an *educational* institution. It does not have as its aim the conversion of students. It is not an evangelistic arm of the Church. It is a decidedly *covenantal* institution and aims at qualifying the covenant youth to take their place in life.



# Education and Missions – Continued

## Cross and Resurrection

**E** DUCATION as an activity conducted by and for Christians is a manifestation of the resurrection life of the believer. Having been crucified with Christ he has been raised to a new life and this life comes to expression in all he undertakes to do. There can be no Christian activity of any kind unless the Cross has first been accepted. We cannot rise to a new life in any sphere or area of activity if we have not first died and been buried with Christ. Only when we have been made conformable to his death can we know the power of his resurrection and walk in newness of life. Therefore the theme of all Paul's preaching was Christ and Him crucified. With the acceptance of this message comes the possibility and the reality of a new life.

Christian education is, like all Christian effort, a resurrection activity. As such it is an activity that depends wholly for its character on the prior acceptance of the Cross. To present such education to children who as yet bear no relation to the Cross is meaningless. Education is not made Christian by the fact that the teachers are Christian, but by the fact that the *school* is Christian. For this reason a public school having Christian teachers can hardly be called a Christian school. If it be replied that on the mission field we do not have Christian schools but *mission* schools the question must be asked — What is a *mission* school? Is there mission art, mission science, mission engineering, mission farming, mission sewing, mission carpentry, mission recreation, mission astronomy? If not, how can there be mission education?

## The Church, The School, And the Divine Ordinance

**A**S IT is not the function of sewing or astronomy or farming to effect conversion, so it is not the function of education. When a church so uses it two basic laws are violated. It is contrary to the nature and purpose of the church to engage in education. Its task has been clearly defined as proclamation of the Gospel. The Gospel has meaning for all the areas of life but it does not permit the church itself to venture actively into those areas. In the second place it does violence to the nature and purpose of education to use

schools for evangelistic purposes. They cease to be truly educational institutions and are bent to a purpose they are not intended to serve.

Is it therefore true that the use of schools for evangelistic purposes is "congenial to the Gospel"? Is it true that the use of education in evangelism is comparable to Paul's using available means of travel, synagogues, homes, the school of Tyrannus? When Paul traveled he used ships or whatever other means for the purpose for which they existed — namely to get people from one place to another. When he used synagogues for preaching he put the synagogue to the use for which it had been instituted, namely instruction in the Word of God, and so one can go on with all the examples cited by the majority. It is hardly "congenial to the Gospel" when an activity that God ordained for a given end is made to serve a purpose foreign to that end. There are laws in the realm of nature and there are laws in the realm of grace. The failure to recognize this has too often brought the church into involvements which have stood in the way of her discharging her true purpose.

The minority, therefore, points out that "the mingling of activities arising out of creation with those arising out of redemption have had most disadvantageous results on many mission fields. Inevitably the true nature of education or medical or other such institutions asserts itself. Growth and development being the law of life, a progressive elaboration of the true nature of the institution takes place and the evangelistic purpose, which was a superimposed element to begin with, is progressively crowded into a corner. The result has generally been that activities instituted to be evangelizing forces have ended up by being civilizing agencies and many have even wholly lost their Christian character. In many avowedly evangelistic mission schools conversions have been relatively few and the effort and expense that was put into them was out of all proportion to the results that were achieved."

## The Place of the School on the Mission Field

**T**HERE are few forces more powerful in the life of society than the force that is exerted by education. What

is true in our society at home on this score is no less true on the mission field. The minority not merely admits this, it asserts it. It believes that at the earliest possible opportunity schools should be brought into being and that they should form a major factor in molding the life of the Christian community and in undergirding the Church.

The Gospel that the missionary preaches is eminently the Gospel of the Kingdom. It comes with the demand that Christ be made Lord of the lives of men. The demand is therefore made of all believers that their homes be made Christian homes and that parents recognize and discharge their covenant responsibilities in the training of their children.

When this message is effectively proclaimed and obediently heeded, parents will, as a matter of course, wish that the education to which their children are exposed conform to the norms of the Kingdom of which they have become citizens. The missionary will encourage and the parents will desire Christian education for their children. And so there will come into being that complex, that three-fold cord that is not easily broken — the Christian Church, the Christian Home and the Christian School.

It is altogether possible, however, that when the Christian community comes to the point where Christian schools are needed the required skills, organizational know-how and teaching personnel will be wanting. The missionaries have encouraged, the parents have come to desire the school, but they have not the competence to conduct an educational enterprise. In such a case the minority holds, the Church may do on the mission field what it often does at home — it extends temporary assistance. At home this assistance usually takes the form of money grants. Especially during the depression was this kind of help forthcoming. On the mission field the assistance will have to be of another kind. There will be needed especially teachers to get the educational enterprise under way. They will initiate the work, provide the organizational basis for the school and lay the foundation for a continuing educational enterprise.

When the church helps to sponsor education of this type on the mission field it knows exactly where it is at. The scope of the undertaking is determined by the size of the Christian community, its nature is determined by the covenantal character of the homes from



which the children come. Moreover, the school will be an *educational* undertaking. It will be a *school* in the true sense of the word.

It must be remembered, too, that we are concerned with bringing *indigenous* Christian churches and communities into being. The basis for a Christian indigenous educational enterprise will have been laid when *only such help* is extended by the sending church as the local Christian community is itself unable to provide. When this becomes a governing principle the growth of the Christian group in knowledge and in competence will be accompanied by corresponding decrease in the missionary force. I call to mind a mission station where one white teacher began the educational work. Today there is still one white teacher, but there are

five native teachers and the routine administration of the school is in the hands of one of these.

Where such an aim is pursued with a will great things can be done. In 1890 educational work of this type was undertaken by several Presbyterian missions in Korea. In 1907 there were 337 primary schools to educate covenant children and of these all but three were entirely self-supporting. Our denominational mission work in Nigeria is conducted on the same basis. Other mission areas can be cited where the principle has been applied with success. One very simple consideration underlies the whole procedure — the laws for Kingdom growth and for the work of the Church are the same for the mission field as for the home base. There is one church and its nature and pur-

poses are everywhere the same. And there is one Kingdom of God and its nature and purposes are the same everywhere, too. We must get away from the idea that when the Church engages in mission work it is suddenly relieved of the limitations with which we jealously surround her activities at home. Let the Church be the Church — everywhere; and if at any time it must assume obligations which are not part of its normal activities let this be done critically and with full consciousness that a departure is taking place from the normal task of the Church. We shall then also develop in those whom we seek to serve an ecclesiastical and Kingdom consciousness that shall make possible an extension of the Reformed life and witness in ever widening circles.

# Places, Immigrants, and Time

By JOHN GRITTER\*

THE editorial staff of *The Reformed Journal* has offered its columns for articles on our work in Canada, particularly on problems confronting us in that work. These problems are legion. They abound on every sector of our field of operation. Discussion of these may help to understand better what is being done, what more ought to be done, and how it ought to be undertaken.

It was suggested that we write especially on phases of our work which may be brought to our prospective synod for decision. Not being on the committee which supervises this work this writer has no way of knowing what may be brought there. However, this contribution may serve to point up something along that line, too.

Some of the readers, who have the good habit of noticing the name of the author before reading an article, may expect something on the ministerial supply in our work in Canada. That remains an urgent problem. However, this writer has been given the opportunity to make a contribution on that subject by a different avenue and does not intend to spend his powder in that direction before that occasion arrives. This time we may as well start from the bottom up. Before we can talk about our

work among the immigrants we must have immigrants to work with. That brings up our very first problem. It's like the man in industry: First there must be an opening, a need to be supplied; then he must endeavor to fill that need with the proper article at the best time.

## Preliminary Work

SOME of our good readers may be a bit surprised that this should be a problem with us. Perhaps they have had a vague impression that these immigrants just come in a steady flow, by some magic power, and all we have to do is open our arms and catch them and gather them into the fold. It's not as simple as all that. As a matter of fact, very few immigrants arrive without a lot of labor being expended to make their arrival possible, labor not only on the other side of the ocean but on this side too.

First, we must find openings.

By the sound of it that should not be too difficult. Canada is a big country, the third in size in the world. It has oceans of room. And it is developing fast: think of the oil in Alberta, the minerals to be mined in Labrador, the St. Lawrence Seaway. Canada needs men to build up all these projects, to strengthen its fundamental industries, to boost its defenses. It needs especially farm labor to increase its farm output and to replace the young men who

in recent years have left for the cities. Canada needs more skilled labor. The leaders in general realize it too, and are steadfastly going forward with immigration plans despite some voices in the opposition. There should be plenty of opportunity.

Yet, there are difficulties. In spite of considerable building, homes are scarce. There are old, deserted places here and there; some of them can be re-conditioned, others are beyond that. At times immigrants live in quarters which are absolutely unfit. That is not right. How to find decent places for all remains a problem, especially in some locations.

Human nature being what it is, some of the farmers are slow to respond to the offer of immigrant labor. They should have some, they could profit by it, but how to make them see it poses a problem. Sometimes they are undecided. In many cases they lack foresight, do not decide to take on a family until they need the help immediately. Then, if it is not possible to furnish a family just that moment, they may take on some other help. Penury, unwillingness to pay a few weeks' wages in order to have the help when needed, may play a role. Some farmers have to be visited a number of times before they finally decide to sponsor an immigrant family.

Of course, there are immigrants who do not satisfy, who are disappointing,

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## Places, Immigrants, and Time - Continued

or even worse. Once a farmer has experience of such a case he hesitates to take on another family of whom he knows nothing, and who can blame him?

The recent wave of unemployment has made some to feel that immigration ought to be restricted, that we are getting too many people here, that we should take less at a time or possibly none at all for a while.

In the case of laboring men the unions are beginning to take a voice in the matter. The government listens to them. These unions are given opportunity to exercise a sort of control: so many can be brought in and no more. And the industries and trades usually are unwilling to sponsor anyone of whom they do not know whether he will be satisfactory or not. Once they are here we can usually find openings for immigrants, but how to find openings is not the easiest matter.

### The Need for Fieldmen

THIS points up an urgent need, that of more fieldmen to find openings. In a few cases farmers or other prospective employers ask for immigrants; in most cases we have to find the places ourselves. A little can be done and is being done by mail. Quite a bit is done by our people who are here. They are on the lookout for opportunities and report them or themselves supply the people. Relatives can be sponsored if a home and work can be found, and much of that is being done. In fact, this is rapidly becoming one of the main avenues by which people come in. Immigrant societies are being formed everywhere, which make it one of their chief aims to bring in more people and to help one another here. All that helps. And it is fine to develop our talent that way and to train our people to be active. Even so, we need fieldmen, men of intelligence, who speak the English well, who can guide and assist our people in their problems, who can discuss matters with possible employers, and who can, if need be, meet government officials. They must be able to give their full time to this.

At present we do not have enough of these. We have a number of them, and they are doing a very valuable work. They are working hard like all the rest of us. But their number is too small.

The result is that places escape us which could have been used had we enough help to cover the field. Rival groups have made their appearance and make their inroads. We home missionaries try to fill in, but should not. Some of us do quite a bit of this work. It sounds rather interesting to hear how a home missionary in Canada is a jack of all trades. In the eyes of some it makes him a bit of a hero. And that is well in the beginning, when a sort of emergency situation exists. But we must not have much of that. In the end it results in spiritual loss. That is not our job and we must get away from that as much as we can. We must have more laymen to attend to this.

Why don't we have more? Because the Immigration Committee appointed for this work does not have the funds to expand in that direction. It is allowed one dollar per church family each year for its work. This one dollar a year does not come in as it should. Some churches are remiss in this respect. Perhaps the committee ought to make a little more noise and stimulate the consistories. Here is something for synod to take to heart. This committee should be able to do more, and for that it needs funds.

### The Right Man for the Right Place

WHEN places are secured the next thing is to find the right people to fill these places.

That, too, sounds rather easy. In the Netherlands there are thousands of people who want to go to Canada. Letters pour in from all kinds of them pleading for help so that they may come here. Many of them are willing to take any kind of a job just so they may have an opportunity to come. It should not be too hard to fill these places.

But don't forget that not every immigrant fits every place. We have had too many cases of "misfits," perfectly good people, of fine calibre, but who landed in places where they did not fit. It is a rather pathetic sight to see a man from the city plugging away on a farm from early morning till late at night trying to do a job for which he is not suited. He may be willing enough, but he cannot give his best there. He is unhappy, and the farmer is dissatisfied, feels that he has been

duped. Here is a man, trained as a gardener, on a cattle farm. In some cases a dairyman receives an immigrant who has never in his life milked a cow! I remember so vividly that man who had spent twenty years in an office and with his family landed with a hard-boiled farmer where he had to work ceaselessly from six o'clock in the morning till perhaps eight o'clock at night, at very heavy labor. Before long there was a terrific howl from that direction, as of people being murdered. It was an impossible situation. After a while they literally fled in dismay, to the city, where they found the life for which they were fit.

How do these things happen? Well, this immigration movement is a big undertaking. It's a tremendous job to get every case just right. At times those who must attend to the details are perhaps not as attentive as they ought to be. Mistakes are made, oversights occur. Sometimes immigrants, in order to get an opportunity to get away, give information which is incorrect. All this has had, sometimes tragic results.

To avoid this much work must be done. We must try to fit the people to the need or we'll have trouble. For that purpose fieldmen are furnished with lists of prospective immigrants, stating size of family, what they can do, and so on. Then our men try to "match" the opening and the people to fill it. Matchmaking is practiced not only in the field of matrimony, it is going on right along in our immigrant work. It gives one a somewhat strange feeling to hear the fieldmen, when occasionally they get together, ask, "Can you use So and So?" "Yes, and I can use a family of such a size." It gives a bit of shock to hear how human beings are handled almost like merchandise. It is not meant that way, but sometimes it sounds a bit like it. But that's the way it has to be done, if it is to be done efficiently. It's all a part of the game. And in the end it works out for the best of all, we hope!

### The Time Element

WHEN the "matchmaking" is completed, the final problem is to get these people in their place at the right time.

Here too there are hindrances. In a few cases some of the immigrants do not pass the tests. Then substitutions have to be made. Transportation facilities are limited. It just is not possible



to bring all the people who are expected here, all at the same time. Often there are delays which seem unnecessary. At a recent meeting a number of our fieldmen were complaining bitterly: they had placed all kinds of families, but these were not coming in. Where's the bottleneck? Are the Canadian officials failing to attend to duty? Is it red tape on the other side which delays the work? Sometimes it's hard to tell. Some of our men will be descending on Ottawa, the capital, trying to loosen the log-jam;

letters will be going out to The Hague, calling for more speed. Spring is here. The field work may begin very soon now. Then there will be a demand for workers. This is the time to have them, not halfway into the summer or in the fall. Industries, too, are picking up again. Soon there will be openings there.

Come on, fellows, whoever you are, that are working in this great movement, let's go! The work here is calling. People are begging for chances to come. There must be no delays.

Let's get those people over here and build up this great country and in doing so develop the Kingdom of God in North America.

And you brethren who are going to synod and who read this: don't forget that Immigration Committee. Don't let it be hampered by lack of funds. This work will have far-reaching results for our church and for the Kingdom of God in general. Let us press forward on every sector. Here is an opportunity we must not miss.

# What Linguistics Can Do for Missions—II

By WM. E. WELMERS

BY A strange paradox, the same person who expects an African language to be quite limited is often convinced that it is so hopelessly difficult to pronounce and complicated to learn that he will never be able to master it. It is surprising how many people actually believe that the French must have a special quality about their noses to be able to pronounce all those nasal vowels. It is not at all uncommon to imagine that African languages can be pronounced only with thick lips. The fact is that anyone — given some intelligent guidance and drill — can learn to pronounce just about any sound or sequence of sounds in any language. Individuals may have special difficulties due to physical defects, but the human speech organs are sufficiently the same all over the world that no language presents insuperable difficulties. But the missionary needs to know a little bit about *phonetics* — the production of speech sounds.

## Sound Patterns

HE WILL learn, for example, that the *p* sound in the English word *pan* is accompanied by a puff of breath strong enough to blow out a match flame held near the lips, but that the similar sound in French *pain* must be pronounced without such a puff of breath, while the sound most like it in Chinese has an even stronger puff of breath. Many languages have sounds somewhat like the *p*, *t*, and *k* of English, but accompanied by a quick closure of the vocal cords. Many African languages have consonants resembling a simultaneous *p* and *k* or *b* and *g* —

which may be approximated by trying to divide the phrase 'lake perch' before the *k*, as *lay--kperch*, and then isolating the last part of it as a single syllable. Arabic and some East African languages have consonants produced by a constriction in the upper part of the throat. North Chinese (Mandarin) distinguishes two sounds, both somewhat like the beginning of *shah*, one with the tongue forward in the mouth, and the other with the tongue pulled back. German and Dutch (and many other languages) have vowels with the tongue position of the vowels in *beet* and *bait*, but with the lip rounding of the vowels in *boot* and *boat*. Almost any language has vowel sounds just different enough from those of English to require some training and practice before one can recognize and reproduce them.

In many cases, further distinctions must be made between 'oral' vowels (produced with the nasal passages closed) and 'nasalized' vowels (produced with the nasal passages open). There are often important contrasts between vowels (or even consonants) with longer and shorter duration. It is fairly well known that Chinese and most languages of southeast Asia distinguish words that are identical in their consonants and vowels by different levels or rises or falls of pitch. It is not so well known that almost every African language is also a 'tone language.' One of the most striking examples is Jukun, the most important language of the Christian Reformed Church's mission field in Nigeria. In the Wukari dialect, twelve perfectly sensible but completely different sen-

tences can be made up of three syllables that are identical in consonants and vowels, but differ only in having twelve different sequences of three level pitches. Another three can be added with still different sequences if the first syllable is changed. All of these things can be taught. The principles for discovering, analyzing, and reproducing them can be taught before the missionary leaves this country. But if we give our missionaries no training here and no guidance by anyone with linguistic training on the field, we can expect only what has actually been happening. They will have no idea of what to listen for, and will be convinced that the language is a confused jumble beyond the capacity of any white man to learn. They can hardly be blamed for ignoring so many important points in their pronunciation that a stranger fails to recognize their speech as his own language.

In reality, every language uses a limited number of phonetic units — roughly twenty to fifty — that are distinct from each other in that language. There may be variations within a unit — in English, for example, the *t* in *tie* is quite different from the *t* in *sty* (as you can prove by saying the two words with a match flame near your lips), but the choice between the two sounds is determined by neighboring sounds, so that the two belong to the same unit. We are not ordinarily aware that they are different, but a speaker of Hindustani would notice it immediately, because in his language these two *t* sounds constitute the only difference between many pairs of words. In his language, the two sounds belong to two



# What Linguistics Can Do for Missions – Continued

different units. Sounds similar to those at the beginning of *so* and *show* belong to three different units in Mandarin, two in English, and only one in Kpelle (a language of Liberia). Such units for a given language are known as *phonemes*, and the analysis and description of them is called *phonemics*. The phonemes of a language include its consonants and vowels (although the distinction between these two types of sounds may not always be as clearcut as we might imagine) and certain isolatable characteristics of them (pitch, stress, sometimes nasalization and duration, occasionally others).

All of this is quite independent of a writing system for the language. The initial consonants of English *sin*, *science*, *schism*, and *cement* are all the same phoneme no matter how we spell them, and the vowel sounds in *boot* and *foot* are different phonemes even though they are written the same. It is often a missionary who first establishes a written form of a language. And unfortunately he often records imaginary distinctions that exist in English but not in the language he is writing, and — what is worse — almost inevitably ignores some important distinctions that do exist. The result is ambiguity that is sometimes so serious that native speakers of the language cannot be taught to read what the missionary has written. An accurate, unambiguous system of writing uses one symbol for each phoneme.

Nor can native speakers of a language be expected to give any systematic assistance in devising a writing system. Although they use a phonemic system whenever they talk, they are not in any way conscious of its nature as a system. They are often surprised and amused when the missionary compares two words to check on some phonemic contrast. They cannot be expected to have the qualifications of language teachers.

The first missionaries on a new field, then, should be equipped to analyze the language and establish a system of writing for it that represents the distinctive phonetic units — the phonemes — of the language. Such missionaries can then give valuable assistance to new missionaries when they arrive and begin their study of the language. But there is usually enough work left to be done — further analysis, translating, preparation of primers and story books, and so on — to make

it highly desirable that every missionary start for the field with a good foundation in the principles of linguistics.

## Grammatical Patterns

OF COURSE, there is a great deal more to a language than merely its sounds and a list of words. Every language also has its own system of putting grammatical units together in *structural patterns*. Suppose you find out how to say 'I saw a dog'; you still have a lot to learn about the sentence. You can't always find out more about it by asking how to say 'I', because the pronoun by itself may have an entirely different form from the pronoun as a subject. In fact, Chinese is likely to leave the subject completely unexpressed. In many languages, it is almost impossible to say a word like 'saw' in isolation; it must have a subject or an object or both. Moreover, you don't know whether the past time is expressed by a prefix, a suffix, a change of vowel, a change of tone, or even whether it is specifically expressed at all. You may get the expression for 'a dog' by itself, but you cannot be sure that it means only a single unspecified canine. There may be no different way of saying 'the dog,' or the word may be a general indication of the canine species without specifying one dog or several dogs, or it may even be a special term for an adult male dog. No native speaker of any language is equipped to point out such structural peculiarities. It would never occur to you to define the English word 'sister' to an African as 'a female child of the same mother and father, with no indication of relative age.' Yet that may be precisely what he needs to know, for his language may have one term for 'older brother-or-sister,' and another term for 'younger brother-or-sister,' specifying the relative age and ignoring the sex.

To get the answers to the vast array of questions of this sort that arise, it is necessary to write down and compare carefully a staggering number of sentences of all kinds. In the process, extreme care must be taken that the person speaking the language — the informant — is given no reason to say things that are awkward in his own language, as we might give up and say 'he no go' to someone who seems to be struggling hopelessly with the compli-

cated negative constructions of English. By comparing sentence with sentence, we begin to isolate the minimal grammatical units, which are called *morphemes*. Sometimes we find morphemes that are subject to regular variation. For example, the common plural ending of English is always the phoneme *s* after some consonants (as in *sites*), always the phoneme *z* after some other consonants and after vowels (as in *sides* and *sighs*), and always a short vowel followed by *z* after the remaining consonants (as in *sizes*). In other cases, a variation applies only to some morphemes. The *f* of *wife* changes to *v* in the plural *wives*, but the *f* of *fife* remains unchanged in the plural *fifes*. More complex situations like the following one from an African language are common: (1) all nouns that end with high tone remain unchanged before a high tone in the next word, (2) before a low tone about half of these nouns remain unchanged, but the other half take a final low tone instead of high, and (3) before a mid tone the first half remain unchanged but raise the following mid tone to high, but the second half take a final low tone. The statement may seem scary, but the evidence for it can be recorded, and the pronunciation changes described by it can be learned. For this particular language, statements just about as complex are necessary for every final tone of a noun, and similar statements for every initial tone of a verb; the amount of complexity is unusual in a West African language. Yet a young missionary who had a little help in tonal analysis at the beginning of his language study reported six months later, 'It's getting now so that when I get the tone wrong it just doesn't *sound* right.' That is language learning at its best.

Still comparing sentence with sentence, we begin to learn also how morphemes are put together to form words and sentences. Many a missionary starts out confidently looking for masculine and feminine genders, nominative and genitive and other cases, singulars and plurals, indicatives and subjunctives, and all the other categories of Latin and Greek grammar. Such categories often appear in published grammars of little-known languages, if only to head a chapter as GENDER and then to say, 'This language has no gender.' (In one such case, by the way, the author failed to notice that the language has five noun classes that function in much the same way as



grammatical gender functions in his own native French.) There is a widespread impression that every language must have the grammatical categories and patterns of Latin, and that their absence is somehow a defect in the language. Actually, there is no evidence, either from logical necessity or from observation, that the structure of Latin or Greek or any other language is in any way superior to other structures. Each language has its own structural patterns, and those patterns form a system. Neither special nor general revelation gives us any right to the haughty snobbery of believing that what *WE* learned in school is necessarily the loftiest and the determinative pattern for all other peoples and languages.

Observation will uncover in other languages some interesting and complex grammatical systems. Languages of central and south Africa group their nouns into as many as fifteen or more grammatical classes, each neatly marked with a special prefix for singular and plural which must be used with every modifier and with the verb of the sentence. A speaker of such a language would probably think that Greek was poverty-stricken with only three genders. Instead of the arbitrary division into masculine, feminine, and neuter with which we are familiar, some languages neatly (and far less arbitrarily) distinguish nouns indicating animate beings from those indicating inanimate objects, or nouns indicating inalienable possessions (blood relatives and parts of the body) from other nouns. In fact, what is so peculiar about distinguishing objects that are flat, round, upright, liquid, and so on, instead of making the real or imaginary sex distinctions of many European languages? A language may well lack moods and voices — and even tenses — but have a verbal system replete with ‘aspectual’ differences to express within the verb form what we express in complicated phrases like ‘I used to do it, I wish he would do it, I ought to do it.’ In some languages of the Philippines, words cannot even be properly called ‘nouns’ and ‘verbs.’ Only prefixes and suffixes serve to distinguish between expressions like ‘I build houses, the house I built, my house, I built that house’ and so on — there is only one stem in all of the expressions, an indeterminate word referring to houses or housing.

In short, the grammar of a language is not a set of abstract logical princi-

ples from which the language hangs, but rather a set of structural patterns, systematic habits which the speakers of the language unconsciously use. It is a contradiction in terms to speak of writing a grammar *for* a language — we can only analyze and write about the grammar *of* a language. And the pressures that lead us to say that one form is wrong and another is right are not the pressures of a sacred external logic, but the linguistic and social pressures of established habits.

### The Task Remaining

**T**HE very purpose of missions is to proclaim the saving gospel of God’s grace. The work includes, in the nature of the case, the translation of the Bible into the language of the people — a task that has hardly been begun, for example, for several languages on the mission field of the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria. We have no time here to go into the special problems involved in the transfer of terminology and concepts from one language into another. Enough has been said for the time being if it is

perfectly clear that that vast work can only be begun by missionaries who have a profound and intimate understanding of the life, the culture, and the language of the people about them. And that is obviously the basic requirement of every missionary if he expects to preach and teach effectively. Linguistics can help to meet that requirement by careful training of our mission personnel.

Reference was made earlier to the availability of such training. Excellent linguistic training, with particular reference to Bible translating, is available at the Summer Institute of Linguistics at Norman, Oklahoma (sponsored by the Wyckliffe Bible Translators). Some other schools of missions are prepared to give some training, and others are looking for staff members qualified to give it. Some universities provide a thorough background in the field, along with instruction in the closely allied field of cultural anthropology. The greatest need at present is that mission boards and individual missionaries should seek such training. The science of linguistics is ready to help them.

## The Bible and the World

The Bible is a missionary book. This means that in the Bible the Gentile peoples are addressed in a direct and straightforward way. That is the mystery of the Bible, its twofold character. It is a book for the Church, a book which can only be understood by the Church; and it is at the same time a book for the world, a book in which the world is called to believe in Jesus Christ. In the Bible God is wrestling with the world, persuading, reproving, admonishing, beseeching the various peoples of the world to accept the truth and be reconciled to God. . . . The Bible is a book for the mission field. It is suitable for translation into all the languages of the world. Every part of it contains a message. It is the only book that can save the nations. Whosoever understands this, let him obey the commandment of his Lord!

*The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World*  
by J. H. Bavinck, pp. 139-40



# Is the Second Coming of Christ Near?

By JAMES DAANE

**E**SCATOLOGY like a yeast leavens the whole lump of New Testament teaching. It pervades all New Testament doctrine and ethics, and accounts for the distinctive New Testament mood and outlook. Where this eschatological ingredient is given only scant attention, the theology of the New Testament is inadequately understood, and its peculiar eschatological outlook lost. In his fine book, *The Pauline Eschatology*,\* G. Vos makes the claim that eschatology is so interwoven throughout the fabric of the whole of Pauline theology, that the pattern of Paul's thought cannot be traced if its eschatological strands are ignored. Vos' claim holds true for the whole of New Testament theology.

It would seem true then that a thorough study of eschatology offers the reward of a better and fresher understanding of New Testament theology. Yet, although liberal theology is plowing the fallow field with unprecedented vigor, conservative theology, showing little interest in the reward, has as yet hardly put the plow to the field. This is especially disconcerting at a time when the waters of our history are so deeply troubled.

## Eschatology and the Historical

**E**SCATOLOGY is grounded in the temporal-historical aspect of Christian truth. It is a doctrine concerned with the temporal-historical quality of all Christian doctrine. Its existence is based on the consideration that this quality is a constitutive element of Christian truth. If it were not, there would be no Christian eschatology. But if Christianity is a genuinely historical religion, grounded in such historical events as the Cross and Resurrection, then Christianity cannot be understood apart from its eschatology.

If Christian truth is, as philosophical rationalism maintains, merely non-historical, timeless, eternal truth, then eschatology is no part of Christianity. If Christianity is merely a body of doctrine having no relationship to such events as the Cross and Resurrection, then Christianity can be understood apart from eschatology. Rationalism

divorces Doctrine from Event, and thereby dispenses with eschatology and reduces Christian doctrine to empty abstractions.

But if the Bible is the record of the Event and the divinely given revelational interpretation of the Event, then Christianity is Event plus Doctrine. If we are saved by the truth realized by God's wondrous works in history, then the historical-coming-to-be nature of Christian truth is an essential constitutive ingredient of such truth, and this Christian truth cannot be adequately understood apart from eschatology.

Eschatology will never be taken seriously unless this historical nature of Christian truth is taken more seriously. If in our doctrinal interpretation of Christianity we forget that Christian truth is constituted by events that have happened or must still happen in the historical process, eschatology will never come into its own. To separate Doctrine from Event leads to a rationalistic misunderstanding of Christianity and to the death of eschatology. Rationalism cannot understand Christianity, for as G. Vos says, it "is from its cradle devoid of historic sense," whereas, "Eschatology is pre-eminently historical."

This historical-temporal nature of Christian truth does not deprive it of eternal validity. But its eternality must be defined concretely not abstractly, as in rationalism, apart from history. The finality of Christian truth is grounded in the finality of the Cross and Resurrection. Since these events are the works of the Son of God, they possess absolute finality (Cf. Heb. 9 and 10).

Rationalism divorces the Doctrine from the Event and is, therefore, compelled to define its doctrines of the End and the Endless abstractly. Thus, for example, current dialectical theology, having divorced its concept of the End and the Endless from the historicity of the Cross and Resurrection, renders both the End and the Endless uncertain. Christian thought, however, defines these terms concretely, with a reference to the finality of the Cross and Resurrection. It takes seriously the biblical statement that Christ was crucified at "the end of the ages." This gives definite content to both "End" and "Endless." All thought about the

end of the world and the end of times must begin with the Cross defined as the End. If our thought does not begin here, our thought of the end will be empty and abstract. The traditional definition of Eschatology, by divorcing Eschatology from the historical basis of the first coming and restricting it, both as to limits and contents, to the second coming, is working with an abstract concept of the End and is thereby doomed to produce an abstract, empty eschatology. The question, therefore, of the nearness of the End and of the second coming of Christ, must be answered in terms of the End as given in the Cross — an event, which, according to the Bible, took place at the "end of the ages."

## Abortive Attempts to Solve the Problem of the 1900 Years

**T**HE Bible plainly teaches that certain events must take place before Christ's return. But the Bible teaches just as plainly that believers of every generation must always be on a watchful alert for the reappearance of their Lord. Paul tells the Corinthians that the ends of the ages have come upon them and that their conduct should be determined by this consideration. Because the end is near, the Lord at hand, they must weep as those that weep not, laugh as those that laugh not; they that have wives should be as those that have them not, and others should refrain from marriage.

In view of the fact that 1900 years have passed and the end is not yet, how can we account for Paul's insistence that the Corinthians were to be alert and to modify their conduct because of the nearness of the end? Was Paul mistaken? But if so, how can we trust him on any other matter? Moreover, did not Jesus himself say that he would come "quickly?"

Many attempts have been made by conservatives interested in harmonizing the New Testament's teaching of the nearness of the end with the undeniable fact of the 1900 years, without surrendering the reliability of Scripture. Concerning all such attempts it may be said that to the degree that they have ignored the New Testament's own conception of time, the harmonizations

\* Reprinted, Eerdmans, 1952



have been forced and unconvincing. The solutions were frequently artificial because it was overlooked that the time of the second coming must be determined in the light of the New Testament's conception of time, and the question of the end, in the light of the New Testament's idea of the end.

One attempt to solve the problem takes recourse to physical death. Since any person may die at any time, the end is said to be always near for every person. Everyone, therefore, ought to watch and pray. (This is an attempt to make every date on the calendar near to the End without reference to the Cross.) However true this may be, it is plain that there has been a transfer of subjects. The end of a person's life is not the end of the world; the time of a person's death is not the time of the second coming. (As a matter of biblical fact, no person's death will coincide with the moment of Christ's return.) Nor is being alert for the second coming identical with alertness for one's physical death.

Grossheide in his *De Verwachting der Toekomst van Jesus Christus*, makes Paul's statement, "the time is shortened" (I Cor. 7:29), refer merely to the nearness of an individual's death. Paul's statement, "the Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5), he explains as referring merely to the Lord's omnipotence. And Paul's statement, "now is salvation nearer" (Rom. 13:11), is explained without any explanation of the word "nearer." Grossheide simply claims that these texts must not be related to the second coming! But how can we deny that these texts are loaded with eschatological significance?

Charles Hodge in his *Systematic Theology* faces the question as to how Paul could, in view of the 1900 years, declare that the second coming is an impending event, without opening himself to the charge of error. Hodge's best answer is that Paul could say the end is near because God does. "If God, who knew that Christ was not to come for at least eighteen centuries after his ascension, could say to his people: 'The day of the Lord is at hand' . . . then that language was appropriate even on the assumption that those who used it knew that the second advent was not to occur for thousands of years . . ." This indeed protects Paul from error, but it gives no explanation for the propriety of the claim whether made by God or Paul.

Sometimes "prophetic foreshortening" is resorted to: the prophetic

manner of telescoping close and far-off events, creating the impression that they happen simultaneously, is used as an explanation. Yet this explains nothing. It suggests that the nearness of the end is merely an optical illusion due to the manner in which the prophetic eye was focused. But the New Testament teaches plainly that the nearness of the end is a fact, not an illusion. Such usage of the "prophetic foreshortening" is a denial, not an explanation of the nearness of the end. Furthermore, such usage of the prophetic foreshortening misses that singular significance of the prophetic foreshortening which harmonizes perfectly with the distinctive feature of New Testament eschatology, namely, *the prophetic perception that the End is near because it is given in the Mid-point*. If the distinctive teaching of the prophetic perspective is reduced to mere optical illusion, the very prophetic understanding of the nearness of the end is discarded. When the prophetic perspective is regarded as defective focusing, the nearness of the end is not explained, but explained away. Such misuse deprives the New Testament of its right to maintain that the End is a reality in the present, and, therefore, near. Such misuse creates the possibility of pushing the End far into the future.

When the New Testament understanding of the nearness of the end is lost through the reduction of the prophetic perspective to an optical illusion, it becomes impossible to understand the New Testament understanding of the Signs of the End. If the End is pushed forward to the last calendar date, the sign-character of the early signs given by Jesus (such as the destruction of Jerusalem) and that of the signs that attend the whole New Testament dispensation (wars, false messiahs) cannot be retained. *No earlier or later moment in history can contain a sign of the nearness of the End, unless the End is near to that moment*. All New Testament signs of the End are signs of its nearness; none indicate that the end is far away! There are indeed signs that indicate an earlier and a later, but none that the end is far away. When the End is defined merely in terms of a last calendar date, everything is reduced to confusion. The New Testament idea of nearness is then destroyed, the sign-character of what our Lord called signs is reduced to the vanishing point, and the only genuine sign of the end becomes one that coin-

cides with the end of the world itself — at which time no sign is needed or usable. A sign in the present of the nearness of an End that is far away, is a contradiction in terms. Destroy the nearness of the End, and the character of Signs is also destroyed. Only when the New Testament idea of nearness is understood, is it possible to understand the New Testament idea of Signs.

## The New Testament Understanding of Nearness

THE key that unlocks the mystery of the New Testament understanding of the "nearness of the end," and the "signs of the end," is the New Testament idea of time. The first principles of the New Testament eschatological conception of time are: 1. The nature of the Cross and Resurrection determine the nature of the times, 2. It is the absolute finality of the Cross as a victory over sin that need not be repeated, and the absolute finality of the Resurrection as a life that cannot be invaded by sin, that constitutes the time of these events as the "end of the ages." On the basis of this principle Peter could write that Christ "was manifested at the end of the times" (I Peter 1:20), and the author of Hebrews, that "but now once at the end (consummation) of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26), and Paul could designate the first coming as the "fulness (i.e. the end) of time" (Gal. 4:4).

Only on this basis can the nearness and the signs of Christ's second coming be understood with the retention of their expressed meaning.

Prior to Pentecost the disciples regard the End and the establishment of the Kingdom in purely futuristic, calendar terms: time is simply that which goes on, and is therefore merely endless. This was both a false conception of time and a false conception of eternity. It also resulted in a false conception of the Kingdom. Not knowing the times, they did not understand the Kingdom. After Pentecost, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit — whose very presence was itself a sign of the end — they understand the Cross as that event which arrests time and brings it to an essential halt. Thus the Cross is understood as the End, and on this basis the time of the Cross is declared to be the "end of the ages." By means of the same illumination of the Holy Spirit they understand that



## Is the Second Coming of Christ Near? - Continued

the Resurrection is the power of an endless life. As the Cross is itself the essential End; so the Resurrection is the essential Endless or eternal.

On the basis of this understanding of the Cross and Resurrection the disciples also came to understand the nature of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is here as a present reality. But at the same time they also now understand that the Kingdom is not now, and cannot be present in the dimensions they had in mind when they asked in their pre-Pentecostal ignorance, "Dost thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). By the illumination of Pentecost they come to understand that the Kingdom in its full dimensions awaits the full actualization of the End (Cross) at the end of time, and the full actualization of the Endless (the Resurrection) at the end of time. It will not be fully established within a time that is not *completely* under the dominance of the End and the Endless. When it shall finally receive such establishment it will be beyond any possibility of sin (the End) whatsoever and as such will be an *eternal* Kingdom.

The Kingdom is here, and it is coming; but *the Kingdom that comes is already here, because of the Cross and Resurrection*. But this understanding, it must be noted, rests upon the understanding that the End is already given in the Cross, and what happens at the end of time is nothing more than the complete actualization of what happened at the Cross. The End is here, and it is coming, *but the end that comes is essentially that given in the Cross*. Both the End and the "end of the world" mean: judgment. At the End, Christ was set at naught; at the end of time all wicked men and their sinful history will be set at naught. And the same movement of thought characterizes the Resurrection as the Endless. The Endless (eternal life) is here, and it is coming, *but the eternal life that comes is that which is already essentially here*. The Endless that is actualized at the second coming is but the full actualization of the Endless given in the Resurrection. At the point of the Endless Christ receives eternal life, a new body and eternal glory; at his coming the Church, and the cosmos with her, comes under the full impact of the Resurrection.

It is this movement of thought that characterizes Christian doctrine — a

feature which corresponds to the fact that Christianity is a historical religion. That which shall be, is that which already is. Nothing essentially new takes place at the second coming. The Church is already saved in Christ, and the world with it, for our flesh is already in heaven; she is already one, and holy, and already seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Both hell and heaven, both the judgment and resurrection of the last day, both the End and the Endless are given in the Cross and Resurrection, to which the terms in each pair correspond.

The New Testament eschatological mood is based upon and characterized by this movement of thought. New Testament thought about the future does not move directly from the present to the future, but it moves through the past into the future. In any given "today" Christian thought enters tomorrow by way of yesterday. All Christian thought about the "final state," the "last things," and the End, moves through the finality of the Cross and Resurrection.

Christian thought understands the second coming events in terms of the two items of judgment and resurrection, because it defines the second coming in terms of Christ's Cross and Resurrection. Christian thought does not, therefore, define the End abstractly as a point beyond which there is nothing, but it defines the End in terms of the Cross, and the End in its deepest meaning is understood as *hell*. Similarly it does not define the Endless in terms of an abstract eternity, but concretely in terms of the Resurrection, and in its deepest meaning as *heaven*.

Thus all Christian thought about the end of the world is in terms of the End as given and actualized in the Cross.

The Cross is not an abstract but a real end; otherwise it could not be followed by the Resurrection. If the Cross were not the real End for Christ, Christ could not have begun his endless Resurrection life on the third day. And Christian thought is compelled to think thus about the Cross as End, for his very regeneration is based on the reality of the End as given in the Cross. He possesses an endless, eternal life because his former life was brought to an essential end through the Cross. *His very existence as a Christian is grounded in the reality of the End contained in the Cross*. He lives and moves and has his Christian being in the eschatological realities of the Cross and Resurrection.

For the Christian, therefore, the end of the world is always near. He does not, therefore, need to project himself out of the present into the future to bring the end near by a forward movement of the self. On the contrary, he lives by virtue of the reality of the End and the Endless in his present. For the Christian, the End enters his present from the past; from out of the past the End enters his present, pushes into the future, bringing it under eschatological skies; *and that which enters the future from behind is always near, for it must pass through the present*. It is this movement that characterizes the distinctively Christian conception of history as a movement toward the eschatological goal, and sharply distinguishes it from the evolutionary, nineteenth century conception of historical process.

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It is not the 1900 years that constitute the problem. Nineteen or 1900 year will create the same problem, if the nearness of Christ's return is defined outside the context of the New Testament conception of time.

## LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

To the Editors  
The Reformed Journal  
Dear Sirs:

In Mr. Paul Szto's article "Radical Christianity and the Modern Ecumenical Movement in China," he states: "It is our conviction that the future hope lies in the Reformed witness and in a truly Reformed Ecumenicity. Because only Reformed theology is truly Biblical Christianity in all its fulness, therefore only the Reformed Churches can have the true conception of the Church and Missions."

It appears evident that Mr. Szto's Ecumenicity is not based on the ground of the New Testament; but rather is built upon a specific theology. With this in mind, it is questionable whether his movement, like other extreme movements, can be accepted by the Chinese Church.

Sincerely yours,  
Nelson S. Sheng  
415 No. Hudson St.  
Pasadena, California  
March 21, 1952